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Peace Church Response to Clemson Sit-In Protests

by Bruce Schoup, Pastor of Peace Church

On Thursday, May 14 at Clemson University a racist act took place. The presidents response was anemic. The result was that students took action and initially occupied the administration building. Following their being thrown out which has involved several arrests, students have been peacefully occupying the front steps. Very visible to the public. They have repeatedly reaffirmed their commitment to nonviolence. They clearly have claimed the attention of the President and new chief diversity officer and the news media.

On Sunday, April 17 after church, with the support of Church Council, I delivered a letter of support from Peace Church. Today, the church moderator and I delivered copies to the President and Chief Diversity Officer. Sadly we did not see them.

In our dialogue for with students, we learned that our letter was read on Monday evening, April 18. While the community was responding with food and verbal support, we were among the first to communicate institutional support in writing. I am honored to have been a part of that.

Here is the church letter in support of the student sit-in at Clemson:

> *To the Clemson Students occupying Sikes Hall:*
>
> *As neighbors who share your values, as people who believe that justice and equality are particularly important in our public institutions of higher learning, we want to express in a public way our support for your action. We stand with you in your call for justice, particularly for people of color. We join you in calling upon the university to openly acknowledge the bitter side of its history and the fact that it has been too slow in making changes to create a more inclusive atmosphere. We call on Clemson University to stop tolerating incidents of racism and injustice.*
>
> *We join you in your goals and in your call to "encourage one another to speak up and speak out about issues that negatively affect students from underrepresented groups or vulnerable staff and faculty so that when we call ourselves the 'Clemson Family' we are, at the very least, being somewhat truthful." We honor the leadership you have modeled and your commitment to peaceful and non-violent forms of action while speaking truth to power.*
>
> *Please let us know how we as an open and affirming church can continue to support you.*
>
> *Grace and Peace,*
>
> *Rev. Bruce Schoup, Pastor*
> *Jody Usher, Moderator*
> *Coordinating Council of Peace Church*

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Southeast Conference 50th Annual Meeting

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